

The Address—Mr. Davis

I hope I have convinced you, Mr. Speaker, that shaping our Canadian environment is the biggest challenge we face in the 70's. We need economic growth but we need a clean environment as well. We need social progress and quality of life. We need to renew and revitalize. We need to put the accent on the living rather than the dead.

This is why I urge all hon. members to support us in our initiatives to pass a new clean air act and put more teeth into the Canada Shipping Act during the current session, also to support us in setting up a new department of environmental affairs in Canada, the first national department of its kind anywhere in the world.

Mr. Lundrigan: Would the minister permit a question?

Mr. Davis: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Lundrigan: Perhaps I may not be permitted to say that what we have heard is the biggest contribution to pollution in Canada of which I am aware in the last couple of years.

May I ask the minister a question? In view of the fact that both the west and the east coasts of Canada, with six provinces directly affected and all of Canada indirectly affected by the possibility of fisheries having only about a five year life span left in the event that we do not get very active and aggressive conservational measures from the federal government—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Would the hon. member put his question.

Mr. Lundrigan: My question is coming and it is very simple. Can the minister having given us that gobbledegook, get around to indicating to the Canadian people, to the House of Commons and to his parliamentary secretary who was just recently appointed, what initiatives the new department of environmental control which will be part of the Department of Fisheries and Forestry, is planning to take to protect the Canadian people from the depletion of our major fishery resource which constitutes 10 per cent of the industry producing aspect of our economy?

Mr. Davis: The hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan) is very knowledgeable in fishery matters and he knows—and he knew before he began to ask his question—what our initiatives are. They are several. First, we have, through the North Atlantic Fisheries Commission which involves 12 countries, argued for a sustained yield operation in the North Atlantic. We are trying also by taking the lead at the next Law of the Sea Conference, to make this policy effective, to put fishing on a sustained yield basis and to put the countries which own the shelf areas, and this includes Canadian control over the Grand Banks, in a special position where we will not only have a sustained yield operation out there but where our own fishermen will be on the inside track. It will be the first time in the world's history that we will have had a major fishery with a predictable resource to exploit, and certainly the first time in the history of Canada when our own fishermen will have some sort of guarantee for the future.

[Mr. Davis.]

Mr. Lundrigan: In view of the fact that the North Atlantic Fisheries Commission to which the minister referred has been recommending for five years that initiatives need to be taken and of the fact this commission has proven to be ineffective because it is not at a sufficiently high level to take initiatives, can the minister indicate whether there are any new initiatives to be taken. It has already been proven that the recommendations of this Commission have not been accepted and are not effective. Can he indicate as well—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): The Chair has to bring the hon. member to order. His question is quite argumentative and he will have the opportunity to make a speech in due course. So if he has a question to put to the minister he should put it as plainly and as briefly as possible.

Mr. Lundrigan: I do not have further questions to put to the minister but I would like to say that it looks as though the FLQ—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please.

Mr. McGrath: Would the minister permit one short question? Can he assure the House and the country, and especially the fishing industry of the country, that fishery problems will not be neglected when he assumes his new responsibilities as the minister responsible for pollution. I ask that question quite sincerely.

Mr. Davis: I think the hon. member has asked me a very good question. The fisheries service has to remain an integral service in our new department. It has to be regarded by the fishermen, as their service. It will remain intact in so far as I am concerned. It will also have the first call on my time.

Mr. Lundrigan: Why did the minister not refer to it then?

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Laniel): Order, please.

Mr. G. H. Aiken (Parry Sound-Muskoka): I thought the applause was for me but I guess it was for my colleague, the hon. member for Gander-Twillingate (Mr. Lundrigan).

I was fortunate indeed to find myself following the Minister of Fisheries and Forestry (Mr. Davis) in his remarks to the House concerning his new duties as minister in charge of environmental affairs. I propose to direct my remarks to the same subject.

First, I want to wish the minister well in carrying out the additional responsibilities which the government proposes to give him. Our party agrees with many of the proposals that the minister has made since it was indicated that he would be appointed to this position, and also with many of the actions that he has taken over the last six or eight months in connection with pollution control. We believe that he is concerned, as we all are, with the environment, and he has made an effort to show it.